

VZCZCXRO8016
OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHLC #0405/01 2461509
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 031509Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1400
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LIBREVILLE 000405

SIPDIS

AF/C FOR LISA KORTE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/03/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [GB](#)

SUBJECT: GABON: ALI DECLARED WINNER, LIBREVILLE LOCKED
DOWN, PORT GENTIL IN FLUX

Classified By: Ambassador Eunice Reddick for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

11. (C) The Gabonese Electoral Commission declared Ali Ben Bongo Ondimba, the ruling party candidate, the winner of the presidential election on September 3. Gabonese security forces dispersed a crowd of an estimated 2000 supporters of various opposition leaders who had gathered in a downtown area of Libreville in the hours before the announcement of the results. There are confirmed reports of large crowds in the opposition stronghold of Port Gentil, some 200 miles from the capital, as well as a security breach at the Port Gentil central prison. The atmosphere in Libreville is tense, but subdued with most shops closed for the day. With the declaration of a winner, a 15-day clock begins for the opposition to contest the results. However, Ali Bongo Ondimba will be officially declared the President by the Constitutional Court. END SUMMARY.

ALI DECLARED WINNER

12. (C) On September 3, the Gabonese Electoral Commission (CENAP) provided the official results of the presidential election to Minister of Interior Jean Francois Ndongou who announced Ali Bongo Ondimba the victor. Ndongou read the results for each province and each overseas voting location on government-sponsored television. He reported that Ali Bongo won with 41.73 percent of the vote. Opposition candidates Pierre Mamboundou gathered 25.22 percent and Andre Mba Obame had 25.88 percent.

13. (U) In most provinces, the Electoral Commission's numbers indicated that an average of about one-third of eligible voters participated. In the Haut-Ogooue province (home of the Bongo family), the Electoral Commission reported that 65 percent of eligible voters participated) and voted heavily for Ali Bongo. Haut-Ogooue had 57,522 votes accepted, double the amount recorded in the more populated Ogooue-Maritime (25,341) and almost half the number of voters that were accepted from Estuaire province (112,902)) Estuaire contains Libreville and constitutes 65 percent of the population in Gabon.

14. (U) The next step is for the Minister of Interior to provide the results to the Constitutional Court, which will review the results for a day or two and decide whether to declare the results official and that Ali Bongo is the president-elect. The opposition will have fifteen days to lodge official protests challenging the results. However, challenges to the results will not preclude the Constitutional Court from declaring Ali Bongo before the expiration of the fifteen-day period.

15. (C) The election results were originally scheduled to be revealed immediately following the vote, but were pushed back until the afternoon of September 2 to allow the Electoral Commission to meet with representatives of all the parties. The meeting, originally scheduled for 1500 did not begin

until 2000 and continued well into the night. According to the ruling Democratic Party of Gabon Secretary General Bankoubi, the delay was caused by confusion regarding the vote count in Estuaire province (Libreville third district and Owendo district) and the Ogooue-Lolo province (Pana district). Minister of Interior Ndonogou claims that there was "consensus" between the ruling PDG and opposition representatives during the electoral commission meeting before the official results were announced.

SECURITY

¶6. (C) A large crowd of over 2000 people gathered at the entrance of the area of Libreville called Cite de la Democratie during the afternoon of September 2 (Cite is the location of the conference center where the Electoral Commission met to finalize the numbers). The crowd stayed through the night, waiting for the presidential election results to be declared. At 0900 on September 3, in advance of the statement by the Minister of Interior regarding the official numbers, the crowd was dispersed by security forces that included the police, gendarmerie and military. Tear gas and rubber bullets were used. Opposition candidates Pierre Mamboundou, Andre Mba Obame and Zacharie Myboto were in the crowd.

¶7. (C) There is a heavy security presence throughout Libreville. Roadblocks and traffic controls manned by the military and police have been established along the Bord de Mer and throughout the city. No other large protests or marches have appeared in Libreville besides those at Cite de la Democratie.

¶8. (C) The situation in Port Gentil is fluid. RSO confirms

LIBREVILLE 00000405 002 OF 002

that there was a security breach in the central prison, allowing an indeterminate number of prisoners to escape. Large crowds have gathered in the city center and are marching through the downtown area. Embassy contacts tell us that buildings with ties to the French government (including the French Consulate) and French industry are targets for the crowds and, in some cases, received structural damage. Police and military are working to control the situation.

COMMUNICATION

¶9. (U) Internet and television continue to operate normally with a couple notable exceptions. SMS/text messaging has been discontinued since September 1 when the government ordered wireless providers to suspend SMS service to prevent the spreading of election-related rumors. Government-affiliated television has continued to operate as normal through the cycle.

¶10. (U) Independent candidate Andre Mba Obame,s extensive media holdings have been disrupted. The night before voting, August 29, TVPlus, a channel owned by Mba Obame, had its signal interrupted that continued until September 1. Local and international media also claim at 0300 on September 2 that masked gunmen destroyed an outside satellite and broadcasting equipment operated by Go Africa, another Mba Obame holding.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) Libreville is tense, but largely calm, with much of the population staying indoors and close to home. Security forces were quickly deployed throughout the city and will likely remain a heavy presence for some time. Initial reports of voting numbers are a concern, especially the large numbers of eligible voters and the exceptionally high percentage that voted in Bongo,s sparsely populated home area. It would be surprising that this rural province turned in such strong numbers compared to Gabon,s more densely populated urban areas. This requires further investigation. We are trying to confirm reports that Mamboundou, Mba Obame, and Myboto were all injured when the crowd in front of the Cite de la Democratie was dispersed. We will continue

seeking clarification on the timing of Bongo,s installation.

END COMMENT.

REDDICK